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WASHINGTON D.C. – The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) yesterday met with family members of Baha'is unjustly imprisoned in Iran. These family members seek to highlight the status of their family members and friends who have been persecuted and imprisoned solely for adhering to their faith.

“During the past year, religious freedom conditions continued to deteriorate in Iran, especially for religious minorities, most notably Baha'is and Christians,” said Katrina Lantos Swett, USCIRF's Chair. “In fact, religious freedom conditions in Iran have regressed to a point not seen since the early days of the Islamic revolution more than 30 years ago.” USCIRF will be testifying on Friday, March 15, before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission on *The Worsening Plight of Religious Minorities in Iran*.

Also this week, Senators Durbin (D-IL) and Kirk (R-IL) introduced a [resolution](#) that condemns the persecution of the Baha'is in Iran. A companion measure shortly will be introduced in the House. .

In late February, the U.N.'s Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran issued a [report](#) that underscores the continued widespread and systematic violations of human rights in Iran and the ongoing intimidation, arrest and detention of religious minorities. Last October, the Special Rapporteur identified the Baha'i community as the "most persecuted religious minority in the Iran." The Baha'is, according to the Special Rapporteur's report, continue to be "systematically deprived of a range of social and economic rights" and 110 Baha'is are currently detained for exercising their faith; 113 are awaiting summonses to serve their sentences; and 268 reportedly are awaiting trial. Importantly, the report lists the names of detained Baha'is and Christians, their date of arrest and sentences, and other details.

The Special Rapporteur's report also highlighted the perilous status of Christians in Iran who are being arrested and prosecuted on vaguely worded national security crimes for exercising their beliefs. USCIRF has condemned the treatment of Christians in Iran and spoken out against the [charging](#) and [sentencing](#) of Iranian-born American pastor Saeed Abedini to eight years in prison for "threatening the national security of Iran."

For over a decade, USCIRF has recommended, and the State Department has designated, Iran as a "country of particular concern," or CPC, under the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA). Iran has merited this most serious and critical designation for its systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom, including prolonged detention, torture, and executions based primarily or entirely upon the religion of the accused.

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